

HEALTH AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 18 June 2025

PRESENT – Councillors Johnson (Chair), Anderson, Beckett, Crudass, Holroyd, Layton, M Nicholson and Mrs Scott

APOLOGIES – Councillor Pease

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillors Roche, Matt Thubron (North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board) and Kathryn Warnock (North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Lorraine Hughes (Director of Public Health), Anthony Sandys (Assistant Director - Housing and Revenues), Claire Gardner-Queen (Head of Housing), Lisa Soderman (Head of Leisure), Claire Turnbull (Housing Manager - Management Services) and Hannah Miller (Democratic Officer)

HH1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

HH2 TO CONSIDER THE PROPOSED DATES AND TIMES OF MEETINGS OF THIS COMMITTEE FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2025/26

RESOLVED – That meetings of this Committee be held at 10.00 a.m. on the following dates :-

3 September, 2025

29 October, 2025

7 January, 2026

4 March, 2026

15 April, 2026

HH3 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS SCRUTINY HELD ON :-

(1) 2 APRIL 2025

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 2 April 2025.

RESOLVED – That, with the suggested amendments, the Minutes of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 2 April 2025 be approved as a correct record.

(2) 13 MAY 2025

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the special meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 13 May 2025.

RESOLVED – That, with the suggested amendments, the Minutes of the special meeting of

this Scrutiny Committee held on 13 May 2025 be approved as a correct record.

HH4 WAITING LISTS FOR NHS SERVICES

The Deputy Director of Planning and Performance, North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board gave a presentation updating Members on waiting lists for NHS services for County Durham and Darlington Foundation Trust (CDDFT) in relation to planned care and cancer.

It was reported that the overall waiting list had progressively reduced over the last 12 months and was below planned levels; and the proportion of patients on the waiting list who had been waiting for less than 18 weeks had been relatively stable over the last 12 months, with signs of improvement from July 2024.

The presentation provided details of long waiting patients, with Members noting that CDDFT had zero reported 78+ww and 104+ww patients. It was also reported that the number of 52+ww had progressively reduced from August 2024 through to December 2024, however had increased slightly towards March 2025; and that a low number of 65+ww remained until December 2024 which was now showing as zero for March 2025.

The presentation provided a breakdown for each speciality, with Members noting that Trauma and Orthopaedic, General Surgery, Gynaecology and Other – Paediatric made up 50 per cent of the overall waiting list; and details were provided for the composition of outpatient attendances.

It was reported that diagnostic performance had been progressively improving over the last 12 months and was well below the North East and North Cumbria average position; the national ambition was 5 per cent and CDDFT were almost meeting this ambition with the aim of 1 per cent by March 2026; and in relation to Cancer services, CDDFT had consistently performed better than the North East and North Cumbria average position. Members noted that planned developments and improvements for cancer services in 2025/26 were being supported by the Northern Cancer Alliance.

Members sought an update on Breast Services and were informed that a managed clinical network across the North East and North Cumbria, facilitated by the Northern Cancer Alliance had been working on an improved clinical modelling for breast services, and an emerging clinical model had been identified which required agreement with providers. Members were advised that stakeholder engagement would be undertaken and that a further update could be provided to Members.

Discussion ensued regarding right place first time and whether delays to treatment could be linked to accessibility issues. Members were reminded that not all hospitals provided the same service so there may be an expectation for patients to have to travel however patient choice existed in relation to accessing services; and following a question Members were advised that the ICB was responsible for commissioning the patient transport services, which was provided by the North East Ambulance Service and that there was an eligibility criteria to access this service.

Members requested further details of waiting times for speciality services within diagnostics;

and discussion ensued regarding the fluctuations within diagnostic activity over the last 12 months and the potential impact of cuts to the Integrated Care Board on meeting targets.

RESOLVED – That the Deputy Director of Planning and Performance, North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board be thanked for his detailed and accessible presentation.

HH5 HOUSING SERVICES FIRE SAFETY POLICY FOR PURPOSE-BUILT BLOCKS OF FLATS, SHELTERED AND EXTRA CARE ACCOMMODATION 2025 - 2030

The Assistant Director Housing and Revenues submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that consideration be given to the draft Housing Services Fire Safety Policy for Purpose-Built Blocks of Flats, Sheltered and Extra Care Accommodation 2025-2030 (also previously circulated) prior to its consideration by Cabinet on 8 July 2025.

The submitted report stated that this Scrutiny Committee had considered the existing Housing Services Fire Safety Policy 2022-2027 on 2 November 2022 prior to approval by Cabinet on 6 December 2022; that this policy covered the fire safety arrangements for Council owned sheltered and extra care accommodation; and that work had been ongoing in developing a policy for Council owned purpose-built blocks of flats.

It was reported that a single policy covering all Council owned accommodation with communal areas had been developed and updated with the latest legislation and best practice guidance; the draft policy sets out how the Council would provide staff, residents, visitors and partner organisations with clear guidelines as to how to prevent fires and actions to take in the event of a fire to protect themselves and others.

The submitted report provided details of the areas covered in the policy; and consultation had been undertaken with the Tenants Panel who were in support of the draft policy.

Members sought clarification regarding the Council's responsibility for the storage of flammable materials and equipment by residents. Members were advised that the tenancy agreements detailed what could and could not be stored, outlined tenants responsibility in relation to allowing access to their property and that enforcement action could be taken by the Council. Members were informed that any hoarding issues could be identified through a range of Council activities including day to day repairs, tenancy audit visits and gas safety checks; and in relation to hoarding, all housing staff received basic awareness training and staff worked closely with tenants and other services for any breaches in contract.

Discussion ensued regarding smoke detectors with Members noting that all new tenants received fire safety checks and all properties had hard wired smoke detectors; and following a question regarding the move towards a 'stay put' evacuation policy Members were informed of the work being undertaken to introduce this. Members were advised that this policy was already in place for sheltered and extra care accommodation.

RESOLVED – That Members support the onward submission of the draft Housing Services Fire Safety Policy for Purpose-Built Blocks of Flats, Sheltered and Extra Care Accommodation 2025-2030 to Cabinet.

HH6 WORK PROGRAMME

The Assistant Director Law and Governance submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that consideration be given to this Scrutiny Committee's draft work programme for the Municipal Year 2025/26 and to consider any additional areas to be included.

Discussion ensued on the current work programme and it was suggested that additional items be included on the Integrated Care Board and expected changes, Physical Activity Strategy, Healthcare associated infections and the Homes Strategy.

RESOLVED – That the Work Programme be updated to reflect the decisions of this Scrutiny Committee.

HH7 REGIONAL HEALTH SCRUTINY

The Tees Valley Joint Health Scrutiny Committee last met on 8 May 2025 and the next meeting of the Tees Valley Joint Health Scrutiny Committee was scheduled for 17 July 2025.

Members noted the approved Minutes from the meeting held on 13 March 2025 (previously circulated).

RESOLVED – That Members look forward to receiving an update of the work of the Tees Valley Joint Health Scrutiny Committee at a future meeting of Scrutiny Committee.

HH8 QUESTIONS

Reference was made to World Continence Week and Members were informed of work being undertaken to assess the provision in the Council's accessible toilets; and following a question in relation to the damaged Council homes on the Neasham site, Members were informed that the site would not be significantly delayed, with the majority of houses being delivered by March 2026 as planned. A question was also raised regarding the site on Skinnergate, with Members noting that the site was in the final phase of demolition.

The Portfolio Holder extended their thanks to the previous Chair of this Scrutiny Committee for their work; and Members were informed of the items scheduled for the next meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board on 19 June 2025.